PROSPECTUS.

The EDITORS of the ENGLISH REVIEW to the PUBLIC.

IN the preſent age of reformation and revolution it is not to be wondered, that changes and reforms ſhould be effected or propoſed in literary Reviews. In all the other Reviews, two innovations have taken place, intended, and, by not a few, conſidered, as capital improvements. Theſe are, 1. An augmentation of ſize as well as price. 2. An increaſe of emphaſis, according with the excitement of the times, in the decided tone they aſſume in both politics and theology. As it is not our deſign to imitate them in either of theſe reſpects, ſome apology for the ſingularity of our conduct may, perhaps, be expected by our readers.

The other Reviews, as if inſpired with one ſoul, have ſtarted from the original price of one ſhilling per number, to one ſhilling and ſix-pence, and a proportionable addition to the bulk of the volume. The reaſon given for this change, is, the great increaſe of books; the rapid growth and multiplication of authors. One Review ſet out on that enlarged ground,

which has an impoſing air on minds accuſtomed to appreciate things by their quantity, and others thought it good policy to follow the example. All this was a competition natural among tradeſmen, but not the reſult of profound reflection.

Were it neceſſary, in order to keep pace with invention and diſcovery, to increaſe the quantum of reading in proportion to that of literary publication, the period of human life would be unequal to the taſk; and the republic of letters, like the Roman empire, ſtagger and ſink under its own weight. But this, happily, is not the caſe. It is in the nature of progreſſive improvement, not to increaſe, but to diminiſh the ſize of philoſophical compoſitions; to abridge the labour of memory, reaſoning, and expoſition, by directing the attention to general principles inſtead of particular truths: nor is there any reaſon for apprehending that ſuch ſimplifications can ever have an end; while well eſtabliſhed concluſions become principles or data from whence the philoſophic mind, not overwhelmed or diſmayed, but directed and invigorated by an increaſing influx of light, advances with confidence to others more remote, and far beyond vulgar diſcovery. Truth lies in a narrow compaſs; and, the more general and comprehenſive, the more conciſe and compacted. It is a pyramid, wide at the baſe, narrower as we advance to the ſummit: from whence, as philoſophers have affirmed, the eternal and indiviſible Being, in whom all things have their origin and conſummation, ſees the properties, connexions, and relations of them all by intuitive diſcernment. Now, though this be a point to which finite capacities can never arrive, it is a point to which, by progreſſive knowledge, they may in ſome meaſure approach.

As improvement in endleſs progreſſion may be expected in the diſcovery, ſo alſo it may be looked for in the communication of knowledge. As propoſitions more and more general will be diſcovered, ſo terms more and more comprehenſive will be introduced; more and more accurate and appropriate. But, how much the improvement of language, as an inſtrument of thought, and alſo of an interchange of thoughts, conduces at once to brevity and clearneſs of expoſition, we may learn from the happy effects of ſuch a reformation of phraſeology in the ſtudy of chemiſtry.—All diſpute, where the parties are ſincere, preſuppoſes agreement: agreement in common principles, to which each appeals. There is not a more curious, or more inſtructive phenomenon in the moral world, than two diſputants, concealed from every eye, and unheeded by every ear, contending with warmth, perhaps with paſſion, for their reſpective poſitions. For what is this but to pay homage to each other's underſtanding? Each is confident that he is approved by the other, were he but candidly attended to, and rightly underſtood. He ſeeks no other umpire than his adverſary himſelf. In proportion, therefore, as the rubbage of logomachy is cleared away, and the elaſticity of abſtraction on abſtraction, exalts the mind to higher and higher views, the ſize and number of ſcientific volumes may be expected to decreaſe.

The caſe is not entirely * the ſame in compoſitions of art or books of entertainment: a moral argument that man was made

* We ſay *not entirely* the ſame: for refinement in philoſophy will produce refinement in taſte, and cut off a great many of thoſe compoſitions that turn on vulgar fancies and ſuperſtitions. Who will now think of writing fairy tales, or even an epic poem,

made for ſcience more than amuſement; or rather, that the ſublimeſt amuſement that a rational being can enjoy, conſiſts in the exerciſe of his nobleſt faculty. And, ſince the ſoul of one compoſition of art, does not, like that of books of ſcience, migrate into other bodies of leſs ſtature, the only advantage ariſing from multiplied books of that kind, is, that they afford greater room for ſelection.—If the luminaries of literature have increaſed, and are yet to increaſe in rapid ſucceſſion, ſtill the human capacity is the ſame, and the duration of human life the ſame too, if not decreaſing. The company in ſo crowded an exhibition, muſt be contented with little room. When Virgil introduces into the Zodiac a new conſtellation, he does not extend the ſphere of heaven, but makes ſome of his figures contract their elbows *.—Further ſtill, on this head, if Reviews are to be extended in proportion to the number and ſize of publications, a period may come when they may ſwell monthly to quarto and even folio volumes, and all the leiſure of even a ſtudious perſon may be taken up in the peruſal of Reviews. Reviewers may become the mandarins, the prieſts with whom the ſacred ſtores of literature ſhall be depoſited, and by whom they ſhall be dealt out in what meaſure they pleaſe.

Having thus endeavoured to apologize for the conciſe form, as well as the low price of our Review, we proceed to offer

that is in his ſober ſenſes? There is ſcarcely any kind of poetry, at the preſent period of preciſion, and accurate inveſtigation, that is at all tolerable to a cultivated mind, beſides the dramatic and the deſcriptive.

* Ipſe tibi [Cæſari] Jam Brachia contrahit ardens Scorpius.—Georgic, lib. 1.

an

an apology, alſo, for not aſſuming any violent or decided tone on one ſide, and, indeed, for not taking any part, whatever, in politics, in theology, or any ſpecies of literary controverſy. This apathy will no doubt appear very hard, and unreaſonable to thoſe who are accuſtomed, every morning, to have their wiſhes gratified, or their apprehenſions ſoothed, by congenial newſpapers, bookſellers, and maſters of coffee-houſes. The condition of life, it is urged in favour of party-reviews, would indeed be wretched if men were to believe nothing but what is true; or to know all that is hereafter to come to paſs. It is a principle in human nature to feed and prolong whatever appetite, paſſion, emotion, or ſentiment, or train of ſentiment, is uppermoſt in the mind, and habitually predominant. If it be true, that ideas are to the ſoul, what material food is to the body, a man cannot reverſe his habitual train of thinking, and adopt a new one, without loſing his perſonal identity, and tranſmigrating, as it were, into a new creature. Many are the evils ariſing from groundleſs fears: it is but reaſonable that the gloomy ſhould be compenſated by the gay illuſions of the imagination. When Jehoſhaphat, king of Judah, meditated war againſt the king of Syria, he had ſome thoughts of conſulting a very honeſt prophet, Micaiah the ſon of Imlah. But he ſaid, on reflection, "I hate him, for he doth not propheſy good concerning me, but evil *." This, it muſt be owned, was natural: and is it not alſo natural for a republican to call for the Monthly Review, a diſſenter for the Analytical, and a high-churchman for the Britiſh Critic?

True; but there is, we preſume, a claſs of readers different from all theſe: young perſons whoſe political and theological

* 1 Kings xii. 8.

opinions are not yet decidedly formed; and others who have in their complexion a tincture of the *nil admirari*, who are not apt to be very poſitive or dogmatical about any thing, who are more inclined to trace cauſes than to wonder at effects, and may be deſirous to know what is ſaid on both ſides of a queſtion from mere curioſity. It is very reaſonable that this claſs of readers ſhould be accommodated with a literary journal to their mind, as well as others.

Though it be on the ſubject of politics and theology that the prejudices and partialities of Reviewers are moſt glaring, their neglect, their incapacity, or their injuſtice, are manifeſt in other inſtances.—Paſſing over the vulgar objections to Reviews, drawn from the haſte with which they muſt write who write for daily bread; the influence of bookſellers; and other arguments equally invidious; let us ſuppoſe that the reviewer is fully competent to the office aſſigned, and a man of the moſt perfect independence of ſituation as well as probity and honour. It cannot be affirmed that even ſuch a man, in every caſe, is likely to give an impartial verdict. If the author reviewed entertain any leading notion that the reviewer diſapproves, if he attack any of his favourite doctrines, or even doubt concerning their certainty, he is damned for his temerity, and treated coldly even for doubting. It is commonly thought judicious, on the part of the conductors of Reviews, to commit the work of an author into the hands of one who has treated, or perhaps intends to treat on the ſame or ſimilar ſubjects: a metaphyſical book to a writer on metaphyſics; a medical to a writing phyſician; a hiſtory to an hiſtorian, a ſchool-book to a ſchool-maſter, and ſo on. A compariſon is immediately inſtituted in the mind and heart of the

the reviewer, between the ſentiments, merit, and pretenſions of the unfortunate author and his own. He hacks and hews, cuts and carves the work before him as he pleaſes; paſſing over ſome links of the chain, while he combines things never intended to be united. He makes a man of ſtraw, and fights him valiantly. He aſſumes and blends into one, the character of rival, commentator, controverſialiſt, and judge. Nay, farther ſtill: he who reviews rather as an amuſement, than a very ſerious and important occupation, in which his own ſentiments or fame are directly or indirectly involved; even he, without rivality, and without the leaſt perſonal prejudice, is attached to certain parts of a performance in preference to others, drawn to what accords with his own way of thinking by a kind of elective attraction, and more apt to fix on any ſtriking particulars in the matter or expreſſion of an author, than to ſeize the general ſpirit and ſcope of his reaſoning, or to examine how far he has made any addition to the common ſtock of knowledge.—Theſe obſervations, it is evident, refer to books of inſtruction or ſcience.

With regard to matters of taſte, or combinations of fancy, the author of a compoſition of art, has ſtill a worſe chance of being fairly repreſented in literary journals. If there be not, between an author and his critic, a kind of pre-exiſtent harmony and concord, if their minds be not in uniſon, the ſong of the charmer is loſt, charm he never ſo wiſely. On the contrary, the quirks, conceits, and various diſtortions of barbarous, though vigorous genius, are a ſource of delight to congenial minds, unimproved by the contemplation of good, but perverted by a converſancy with faulty, models of compoſition. A reviewer, therefore, even of a pure moral, and

ſtrong intellectual character, may be a falſe mirror; and *his reflections* may be leſs calculated to repreſent an author than to diſplay himſelf.

How then ſhall a Review, perfectly impartial, be conſtituted? Were the writer or writers of theſe obſervations to profeſs greater care and candour than have ever been exerciſed by any other reviewers, or by themſelves, heretofore, the world, taught wiſdom by experience, would not pay the ſmalleſt regard to ſuch a declaration. No! ſimilar habits would undoubtedly grow out of ſimilar circumſtances. We pretend not to control the order of nature.—The great father of ſound philoſophy, when he meditated the advancement of knowledge, did not ſuppoſe that either higher powers or greater induſtry could be employed in times to come, than had been employed in times paſt. He propoſed the advancement of ſcience by means of a new organ. The editors of this periodical pamphlet propoſe, in like manner, to promote moral improvement in the buſineſs of literary reviewing, by means of a new plan, or organ.

It is propoſed that every man ſhall be his own reviewer, and that a theatre ſhall be opened for him on which to ſhew himſelf to the greateſt advantage. It will be ſaid, that an author is the laſt perſon who ought to ſit in judgment on his own works. True; but he has a right, and is the beſt qualified to plead his own cauſe. Let the world be judges, let the author be his own advocate. Let him give an account, himſelf, of his own deſign, and of what he pretends to have effected.—This is, indeed, not altogether a new plan: it is, in part, carried into execution every day. There are authors

who

who find means to be, in fact, their own reviewers: an advantage that ſhould be extended, fairly, openly, and without condition or reſerve, to all men. Nor is this an advantage only to the author: it is an advantage, alſo, to the republic of letters.

The author has a clearer and more comprehenſive view than any other perſon of his own plan and pretence for writing; of the *deſideratum* which it has been his aim to ſupply; of the addition he has made, or thinks he has made, to the ſtock of knowledge or ingenious entertainment.—It will be objected, that of all this the author is not likely to form a juſt eſtimate.—In matters of ſcience, the author will be ſure to give a faithful account of the object and plan of his inveſtigation; the ſcope and reſult of his ſpeculations: becauſe he has, preciſely, the ſame motive for fidelity in this reſpect that he had for his publication. And, after making the greateſt deductions on the ſcore of vanity and ſelf-conceit, it may be expected that from ſuch an account an intelligent reader will form a better judgment of the book in queſtion, than from the partial accounts and extracts of common reviewers. For even in this review of himſelf, we have a miniature picture of the man. We can form a judgment concerning the genius of the author from the manner in which he ſpeaks of himſelf and his work; the grandeur or the narrowneſs of his views; the juſtneſs or the uncertainty of his method of inquiry; the clearneſs or the confuſion of his arrangement, the ſublime ſimplicity and modeſty of his mind, or the unpromiſing petulance of his pretenſions. Let us not ſtand at the door of the exhibition, in attention to the deſcriptions of door-keepers.

Let

Let us ſtep in ourſelves, and have a ſhort converſation with the characters exhibited; a glimpſe, however tranſient.

With regard to the arts; the poet, the painter, the architect, &c. may give the outline of his poem, his picture, or edifice, and alſo a few ſpecimens of the particular members of which they are compoſed.

In carrying this plan into execution, a certain portion of the review muſt be allotted to each writer in proportion to the ſize of his work. It may be thought matter of regret, that this ſpace is to be meaſured, not by the capacity of the author (which would be wholly inconſiſtent with the plan propoſed), but by the ſize of his volume. Men of detail and mere matter of fact, collectors of all kinds, muſt unavoidably, in regard to ſpace, be treated with as great reſpect as the moſt profound philoſopher.—Yet there are conſiderations which ought to conſole men of genius under this unavoidable diſtribution. With reſpect to compoſition in polite literature, though the dull plodder and plagiariſt be allowed as much time to ſpeak for himſelf, as the genuine poet, orator, and hiſtorian; difference of ſentiment, ſtyle, and manner, will caſt the balance in favour of the latter. Nay, it would be for the intereſt of ingenious and ſublime ſpirits, as far as competition with inferior minds may be ſuppoſed to give them an intereſt, that even more than a juſt ſpace ſhould be allotted to dunces, that by their prolixity they might expoſe themſelves to the greater contempt and ridicule. As to the chief point, improvement in ſcience, neither does the ſame degree of glory attend the detail of facts, as the diſcovery of general truth;

nor

nor is it poſſible for the mere collector and empiric to exhibit in an equal ſpace ſo adequate an idea of his induſtry, as the philoſopher may, whether of his legitimate deductions, or of the application, with the reſult, of hypothetical theories. Inventions and diſcoveries in philoſophy as much excel records of particular facts, as flame tranſcends the different ſtages of preceding friction, or lightening the different degrees of that fermentation by which it was preceded. Like flame and lightning, too, they are quickly communicated from mind to mind; and the more clear and certain the truth, the more eaſy and rapid the communication. A vigorous ſpirit, retracing the courſe by which he himſelf arrived at truth, conducts his readers in paths eaſily diſcerned, becauſe ſtrongly marked: weaker minds, who ſcarcely ſee their own way, are involved in endleſs mazes of explication. While vulgar minds amaſs the bulky articles of ſtraw and chaff, and leaves of trees, the man who unites imagination with attainment in ſcience, and a juſt method of inveſtigation, collects, in a ſmall compaſs, grain and fruit, the production of paſt reſearch, and the germ of future and more compendious diſcovery.

It is impoſſible to ſpecify the exact portion of our monthly numbers that may be allowed to pamphlets, and to books in duodecimo, in octavo, in quarto, and in folio. The authors, by looking into the review, will ſee the ſpace uſually allotted to the different publications. If their accounts ſhall exceed the due bounds, of which indeed there is great danger, they muſt either be remitted to them for abridgment, which will poſtpone the inſertion of their articles, or the editors of the review muſt, themſelves, apply the pruning hook.

There

There is no reaſon that we can imagine, why an author ſhould not give an abſtract of his own books that does not bear with equal force againſt his advertiſing in newſpapers, and on the covers of magazines, or even againſt his appearing at all in the character of an author. But if, either through prepoſterous modeſty, or the affectation of it, or from any other cauſe, an author ſhall decline to have any direct intercourſe with the Review himſelf, an account of his book will be accepted from his bookſeller, or any of his friends. If neither author, friend, nor bookſeller, interfere within the ſpace of ſix months after publication, if the book be publiſhed abroad; three if at home; and one month in caſes of temporary diſcuſſions before parliament, or other courts: then, there can be no complaint, if the conductors of the review, or rather ſcientific catalogue, ſhall themſelves give an analyſis of the publication ſo deſerted, according to their beſt abilities.

It ſhall alſo be permitted to all authors to revive an ancient practice, and produce in favour of their works, teſtimonies of eminent men: provided, always, that ſuch teſtimonies, together with the analyſis of their book, do not exceed the uſual bounds allotted to the different articles, of which bounds they muſt form a judgment by inſpecting the review through a ſeries of its numbers.

It is a matter of no ſmall encouragement to the authors of the preſent undertaking, that, if their plan of making the ENGLISH WRITERS ſpeak wholly for themſelves, ſhall meet with the public favour, they are not, like many other projectors, in any danger of being ſupplanted in that favour by

any

any future competition: ſince there is no man, or ſociety of men, however pure their probity or ſplendid their talents, who can poſſibly do leſs than NOTHING!

Such is the form into which it is intended, if the literary world approve (for it cannot be done without their approbation, or all at once), GRADUALLY TO TRANSFORM the Engliſh Review.

To the review of books will be ſubjoined critical notes: but theſe, not ſo much intended as a verdict on authors, as to ſhew what may appear to be a diſcovery or improvement on the one hand, or a deficiency in an argument or induction on the other; and, by occaſionally ſuggeſting, perhaps, ſome ideas of our own, but more frequently by bringing together and comparing thoſe of the different writers on the ſame ſubjects, to unite the labours of the learned and ingenious in one uſeful direction. This, we hope, will not be conſidered as a deviation from the impartiality we profeſs in our ſtatement of the nature, and plan of literary compoſitions. It is not of the ſneers and cenſures of critics that an author of ſenſe complains ſo much as of the partial and falſe accounts that are given of the deſign and conſtruction of his work. When theſe are fairly given he has no other reaſon of complaint or chagrin than the claſſical, and even the ſacred writers, were they to riſe from the dead, would have at the writings of ignorant or abſurd commentators.

At the end of every half year, that is, with every ſixth number, of the Engliſh Review, there will be given a ſeventh

and ſeparate number of the ſame ſize and price, containing an abſtract or abridged account of foreign literature; reſpect being had, chiefly, to the viciſſitudes that may be undergone, or the progreſs that may be made in the different ſciences. And, on ſuch occaſions, opportunities will be naturally offered of briefly remarking the ſum of ſuch progreſs, on the whole, both by Engliſh and foreign writers.

The ſummary of national affairs will be continued; though, in order to leave more room for the review of books, on ſomewhat ſmaller a ſcale. That it may not be wholly heterogeneous in a literary journal, it will not be the object of the editors to give a detail of unconnected events, ſo much as to trace, in events, the influence and viciſſitudes of opinion.

And, that the ſame impartiality may be obſerved, here, that we wiſh to characterize our Literary Review, we ſhall, together with our account of political matters, give a brief ſtatement of what is ſaid, or may be ſaid, on both ſides of the moſt important diſputes.

Before we diſmiſs this addreſs, we beg leave to remind our readers, that we do not, by any means, intend, that the analytical accounts to be given by the authors of books, or their friends, ſhall ſuperſede candid and philoſophical criticiſm. It is only intended, for the reaſons above ſtated, to draw a diſtinct line between the analyſis of a work, and the judgment that may be formed concerning it: and to make the author ſpeak more for himſelf, than has hitherto been uſual in literary journals, and the critic leſs. The editors of the impartial Engliſh

liſh Review, conſcious that they may be expoſed to the miſconception they now endeavour to obviate, have even a ſtronger inducement than others to prove by their conſtant labours, that no performance ſhall be paſſed by without undergoing an examination by men familiarly converſant with the reſpective ſubjects of which they treat. It is in fact promiſed aid in this way, by the moſt eminent characters, that has chiefly encouraged the editors of the impartial Engliſh Review to encounter thoſe difficulties that attend new projects. Theſe are commonly carried into execution only by a ſucceſſion of hints, ſuggeſted by unforeſeen obſtacles. We therefore finally entreat all who wiſh well to the principle of our plan, to communicate to us whatever may tend to its improvement; aſſuring them, that none of their letters ſhall remain unanſwered.

6 NO 67